RESOLUTIONS

FINDING TIME for FAMILY

The many benefits of family meals

A NEW YOU

Make the most of your new gym membership

EMBRACING ACTIVITY

How to watch less and do more in the year ahead

January 2017
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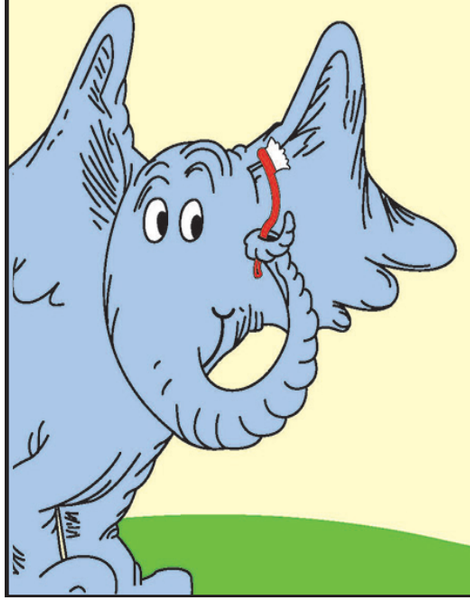

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How to **maximize your gym workout**

Ringing in the new year might be about toasting to good fortune and reminiscing with family and friends. But for many people, New Year's Eve also may be spent thinking about New Year's resolutions, many of which may focus on getting healthy and fit in the year ahead.

According to CreditDonkey, a financial resource that helps people save money and make savvy financial decisions, the health club industry is valued at around $27 billion in the United States. Globally, health clubs produce close to $75 billion in revenue every year. And that industry appears unlikely to slow down anytime soon, as more and more people are resolving to get healthier.

No one signs up for a membership hoping for mediocre results. Therefore, here is how to get the most out of a gym membership and regular workouts.

Get inside the door. The first step to realizing results is to go to the gym. Statistics indicate that within a month or two of joining a gym, attendance numbers dwindle even though people continue to pay for memberships when they are not going to the gym. Schedule time at the gym as you would any other activity. If you need motivation to go, enlist a friend to join and get you to attend.

Do something you love. Gyms cater to so many different workout experiences these days that gymgoers need not worry about getting bored with their fitness routines. Start out with an activity you enjoy doing, or experiment with different activities until you find one that you find enjoyable. You may be allowed to sample classes without paying for a different membership plan, or even just observe outside of the studio door to get a sense of what may interest you.

Work with a trainer. Gyms employ personal trainers who can help novices learn the ropes. New members can rely on personal training sessions to familiarize themselves with a gym's equipment and the proper techniques to employ when using that equipment. Trainers also can play key supportive rolls in members' workouts, helping to keep clients motivated on those days when the enthusiasm is waning.

Vary your workouts. Expanding your boundaries is a great way to push your body and maximize your workout. According to Jacob Wilson, Ph.D., certified strength and conditioning specialist and associate editor of the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, "... by only doing cardio your metabolism will actually go down, making weight loss more difficult. Resistance training, however, builds muscle to increase your metabolic rate." Variety is the spice of life, and it's also essential to effective workouts.

Fitness resolutions are popular, and there are several ways to realize those resolutions and get the most out of your investment in a gym membership.

Did you know?

Many people make losing weight and/or getting fit their New Year's resolutions, and the dawn of a new calendar year is often a great time to find discounts on gym memberships. According to *Consumer Reports*, many gyms and fitness centers, recognizing the desire people have to start the year off on a healthy foot, will greatly discount the cost of memberships in January. But signing up for a discounted gym membership on the morning of January 1 is not the only way to save money and still get fit. Prospective members willing to commit to 12-month memberships may be able to get a gym with costly initiation fees to waive that fee. In addition, e-commerce businesses like Groupon® and LivingSocial may also offer discounted memberships to area gyms through their websites. Fitness-minded people may also be eligible for health club rebates through their health insurance plans. In such instances, health insurance providers may reward policy holders who visit the gym a predetermined number of times in a specific time frame (i.e., 50 visits in six months) with rebates. Such rebates can save club members several hundred dollars per year, greatly reducing the overall cost of their gym memberships.

A recipe for **better cooking skills**

The ongoing popularity of food-focused television shows, websites and apps suggests the public's desire to expand their food horizons and skills in the kitchen knows no bound.

But some people may be falling short in terms of their kitchen skills. According to the market research firm Technomic, 80 percent of millennials say they think cooking meals at home is a smart living choice and nearly 70 percent say they enjoy cooking for others. However, there may be room for many people to improve their cooking skills in the kitchen. The market research group NPD Group found just 45 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 24 consider themselves to be merely "somewhat good" at cooking, according to a survey from January 2015. Cooking well has become something to which many people aspire, but with time-pressed schedules, some find it difficult to make meals happen.

Those who are resolving to make more time for homecooked meals and sharpen their culinary talent have many resources at their fingertips.

Be present in the kitchen. The first step to being a better cook is to spend time in the kitchen and give meal-making your full attention. Distractions such as mobile phones and televisions can detract from the cooking experience. Flavorful and correctly prepared meals require attention to detail.

Learn the vocabulary. It's easier to prepare gourmet meals once you have fine tuned your cooking vocabulary. Cooking may have some abstract or foreign terms that mix together to form the culinary lexicon. Taking the mystery out of a roux or learning what it really means to roast can make it easier to develop your skills to the fullest.

Have fresh ingredients on hand. Build meals around ingredients that are available at home. Shop regularly for the staples that can be turned into many different meals simply with a variation of flavor. Before cooking, practice "mise en place." This is a French term for ensuring all of the ingredients for a particular recipe are prepped and ready to go before the stove is even turned on.

Read over the recipe and understand it. Trying different recipes can be fun because learning to cook well comes with frequent practice. Understand the components of a recipe and refer back to it frequently so that you know how and when to add ingredients. As you develop more confidence, you can veer from the recipe and expand the flavor profile or make substitutions.

Recognize that cooking is somewhat intuitive. A recipe can only get a cook so far. As your skills develop, you will develop a feel for good cooking. For example, you will know when a dough is at the right texture or if meat seems to be at the proper temperature (test it with a thermometer to be sure).

If self-guided lessons are not effective, cook with a friend or family member who is a proficient home chef. This is a good way to learn techniques hands-on.

How to **turn a hobby into a career**

The end of the year tends to be a time to reflect on the previous 12 months. Many people are inspired to find a new career at the dawn of a new year. Some might find it possible to turn hobbies and other interests into ventures that can make money or even serve as new jobs.

Earning a living doing something you love is the ultimate goal for many people. However, before a person tries to turn a hobby into a career, he or she first needs to analyze the situation and give such a momentous decision ample consideration. All hobbies cannot be adapted into lucrative businesses, especially those that are very niche-oriented. The following techniques can help people turn their hobbies into careers.

Streamline and perfect your skill. Before trying to turn a hobby into a career, obtain further training or education, if necessary. Just because you're qualified to do something as an amateur does not mean you can do it as a professional. Research if you need more schooling and pursue that schooling if you find you do.

Appeal to other hobbyists. Hobbyists tend to be quite enthusiastic and passionate about their work. Therefore, your first client base may very well be other hobbyists. Attend street fairs, carnivals and any other gatherings that tend to bring hobbyists together. This can help spread the word about your ventures and open up your work to an extended network of like-minded individuals.

Listen to all feedback. Take criticism and other feedback from as many people as you

See HOBBY | 5

Tips for realizing goals in the year ahead

The dawn of a new year represents a chance to start anew and set goals for the months ahead. New Year's resolutions are often made to provide the motivation people need to improve their lives and make a new year as productive and happy as possible.

While people who make New Year's resolutions fully intend to realize those goals, few actually stick to the game plan. According to researchers at the University of Scranton, just 8 percent of people who make their New Year's resolutions actually achieve those resolutions. While that might make it seem like the odds are against men and women who have resolved to improve their lives in the year ahead, the following tips can help adults realize their goals for the new year and beyond.

Emphasize time management. Hectic schedules can quickly derail resolutions. Many people want to eat healthier and exercise more but find their time is stretched pretty thin, which can make it difficult to get to the gym or prepare healthy meals at home. Finding ways to manage time more effectively can make it easier to stay committed to New Year's resolutions. Right down your daily schedule and look for ways to free up time. If you routinely take an hour for lunch each day, use that time to exercise and eat at your desk when you return from your walk, workout or jog. Try to wake up 30 to 60 minutes earlier each morning to exercise, and make use of time before bed by preparing a healthy lunch for the following day.

Make your goals public. By publicly declaring your intention to improve your life, you're putting some positive pressure on yourself to fully commit to your goal. Friends and loved ones can be great sources of support, and once they're aware of your efforts, you likely won't want to let them down. Once you have decided on a resolution, post your short-term and long-term goals to your Facebook page or let your immediate family and closest friends know of your goals in person. Their encouragement can help you stay on track, and they may even offer to help you realize your goals.

Keep track of your progress. Keep a resolutions journal or start a blog that allows you to write about your efforts. If your goal is to pay down debt, make a spreadsheet that tracks your progress. That spreadsheet might be more motivational than simply seeing a loan or credit card balance gradually reduce on your monthly statement. Writing about your trials and errors can help others and also provide a great way for you to explore your approach and tinker with it to ensure your ultimate success.

Expect setbacks. If realizing resolutions was easy, the success rate would be greater than 8 percent. Setbacks are inevitable, so don't allow them to derail your efforts. Even if setbacks occur when you're well on your way to success, regroup and get back on track without getting down on yourself.

Reward yourself. Don't hesitate to reward yourself as you realize your short-term goals and draw closer to making your long-term goal a reality. For example, if weight loss is your goal and you've adhered to your diet and lost some weight, reward yourself with a favorite meal eaten in moderation.

New Year's resolutions may be difficult to realize, but a few simple strategies can help you achieve your goals and enjoy the fruits of your hard work.

Hobby

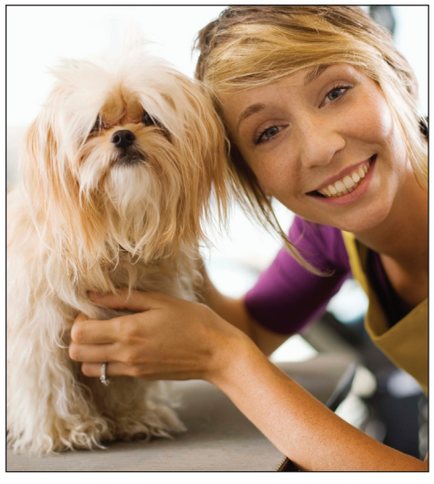
From page 4

can. This will help you to really fine tune and professionalize your hobby. Try brainstorming with people, remaining open to what others have to say about your potential business.

Start small and simple. Getting your feet wet in the business world takes an investment of time and money. It's easy to follow the mentality "go big or go home." But with the goal of turning a hobby into a career, you may want to start slowly — taking the bunny hills before skiing down the expert-level slopes. Start selling items or services in the community. Expand to a website. Keep track of your profit margin before you grow your business even further. You must be realistic in your ability to make money that can fully support you and your business.

Write about your interests. You may be able to make money through your hobby without performing the hobby. Become a freelance writer and share expertise through a blog or by contracting with newspapers and magazines. Sharing your expertise can be a lucrative and less costly way to turn a hobby into a new career.

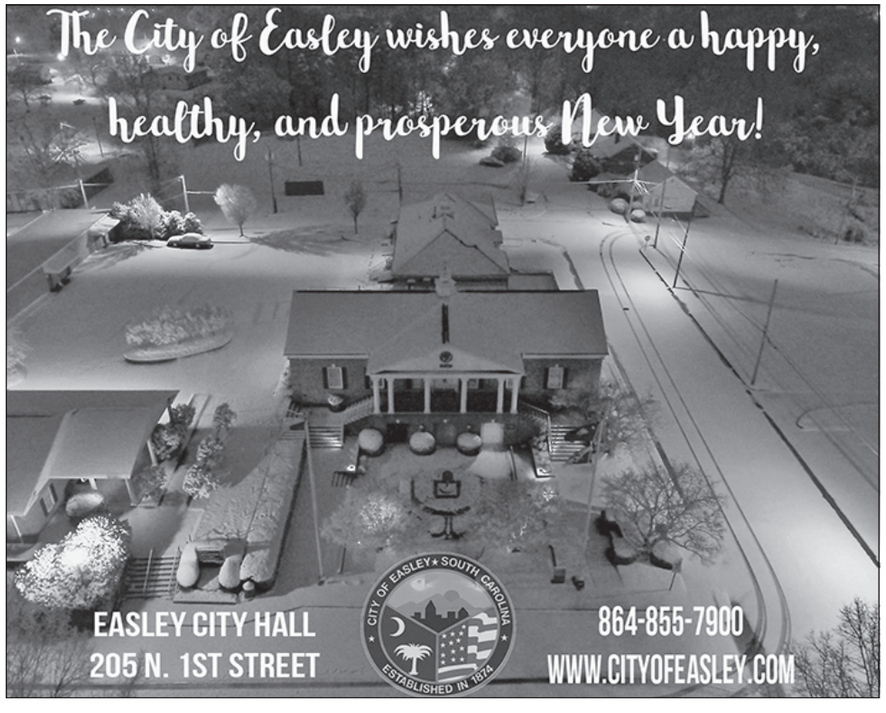
Turning a hobby into a profession may not result in instant success. But with dedication, the dream may come true.



A love of animals could be turned into a career in pet grooming.

The many benefits of **family meals**

Regular family meals can benefit children in various ways.



Families who resolve to spend more time together may reap a host of benefits. One of the easiest ways to enjoy family company is to dine together — with researchers saying it's one of the most important things parents and other caregivers can do for children.

Hectic schedules have made it commonplace for many families to grab meals on the go, whether on the ride to school or during the commute home from work. Family meals may also play second fiddle to sports practices, extra hours at the office and trips to the gym. However, according to family therapist and Harvard Medical School professor Anne Fishel, sitting down for a nightly meal is great for the brain, the body and the spirit.

According to a study from researchers Sandra L. Hofferth and John F. Sandberg titled "How American Children Spend Their Time," which appeared in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, family meals are linked to fewer behavior problems, as measured by a child's score on the Behavior Problems Index. And that is not the only advantage to family meals.

A 2000 survey from the Obesity Prevention Program at Harvard Medical School found that the nine- to 14-year-old children who ate dinner with their families most frequently ate more fruits and vegetables and consumed less soda and fried foods.

Conversations around the dinner table provide an opportunity for children to expand their vocabulary and knowledge about key issues. A 2006 article in *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* found dinnertime conversation boosts vocabulary even more than being read to. Young kids learned 1,000 rare words at the dinner table, compared to only 143 from parents reading storybooks aloud. At the family dinner table, parents can teach their kids how to speak well when among other adults and children without the distractions of television, phones and other electronic devices drawing kids' attention away.

Family dinners can help expand palates and get children to try new things.

Experts in the Department of Child Development and Family Science at North Dakota State University say family meals help provide a regular, consistent opportunity to create an environment of inclusion for everyone in the family. Family meals also become a way to carry on family traditions and instill a sense of family unity.

Eating together may help prevent certain poor adolescent behaviors. Teens who have fewer than three family dinners a week are 3.5 times more likely to abuse prescription drugs and to use illegal drugs other than marijuana; three times more likely to use marijuana; more than 2.5 times more likely to smoke cigarettes; and 1.5 times more likely to try alcohol, according to Court Appointed Special Advocate reports.

Family meals are more than just a chance to enjoy good food together. Such meals may benefit children for years to come.

Social media resolutions

The Internet and social media have revolutionized the way people spend their time. In the not-so-distant past, the sharing of information took considerable time. But now the instant a thought pops into a person's head, it can immediately be broadcast and shared with the world.

According to the marketing and media resource Brandwatch, there were 2.3 billion active social media users as of 2015, and those users averaged 5.54 social media accounts apiece. A new social user is added every 12 seconds. Facebook says it adds 500,000 new users every day and six new profiles every second. In addition, 500 million people visit Twitter each month.

Social media and Internet usage has become pervasive, so much so that some people have become addicted to it. Cornell Information Science has even published research that looked at the difficulty some people have in quitting Facebook and other social networks. Professed "social media addicts" have described the need for social media as being as strong as a cigarette craving. Some people use social media at the expense of sleep, work and family. But even those who can control their social media habits may want to cut back on their usage, and the following are a handful of ways to do just that.

Start cleaning out friend and follow lists. It won't be social suicide if you begin streamlining your social media feeds. Go through friend lists or who you are following and cut out the people with whom you do not regularly converse. Keep it to only the people with whom you care to remain updated.

Think before you "tweet," "post" or "snap." Spend a few minutes really considering if the information you plan to share is worth sharing. Chances are you can reserve social media use for a more important purpose than sharing another photo of your lunch. And although everyone is entitled to his or her opinions, before commenting consider if a comment has the potential to ignite an argument or lead to a lengthy discussion you don't have the time or the desire to get involved with.

Schedule social media time. Instead of routinely checking your phone or tablet for social media updates, set up a time once or twice per day to check in. This way you control how and when you use the information. Similarly, turn off notifications so that you will not be tempted to look at your mobile device each time a tone is sounded.

Keep some things a mystery. Do not share locations or provide updates on vacations or travel plans in real time. This can be a security issue. Always exercise caution regarding the information you share. Making use of the privacy settings available to you may help you achieve your goal of reducing time spent on social media.

Live in the moment. Put down phones and experience situations as they happen, rather than through a screen.

Cutting down on social media usage or using platforms more intelligently are common resolutions. A little diligence can make it possible to break the cycle of constant use.

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